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Soviets defy SALT II, prepare MX-type silos

By Ted Agres
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

The Soviet Union is preparing silos for its multiwarhead MX-type intercontinental ballistic missiles, putting it ahead of the United States in deployment and also in further violation of the SALT II treaty, according to intelligence and military sources.

The United States is still flight-testing its MX missile, the basing of which remains a matter of controversy.

Sources also said CIA and DIA experts, in a recent closed briefing to members of the Senate Intelligence and Armed Services Committees, revealed details of the new evidence of Soviet cheating on arms control agreements, confirming reports by The Washington Times earlier this month.

President Reagan, while opposed in principle to SALT II, nonetheless pledged that the United States would abide by its provisions as long as the Soviets do likewise. For instance, the United States plans to start dismantling Poseidon SLBM submarines starting in 1985 to comply with SALT II.

The new violation involves Soviet

modification of 100 SS-11 ICBM silos to accommodate SS-X-24 ICBMs. The SS-11 is a single-warhead missile, while the SS-X-24 is an MX-type missile with 10 independently targetable warheads (MIRVs).

This silo modification would give the Soviets 918 MIRVed ICBM silos: The ceiling agreed to in SALT II is 820.

It also puts them in violation of the 1,200 ceiling of MIRVed sea- and land-based launchers, as well as the 1,320 ceiling on aggregate air-launched cruise missile-equipped bombers, and sea and land-based MIRVed launchers.

The Soviet MX-type missiles could be fully operational in the modified silos as early as 1985.

By contrast, the first flight test of the U.S. MX missile was last June, after an eight-month delay ordered by the Senate to comply with SALT II. Only three U.S. MX missiles have been flight tested to date.

The Washington Times disclosed earlier this month that U.S. officials had uncovered new evidence of substantial Soviet SALT II violations. These include two admitted to by Soviet generals at a Nov. 22 meeting in Geneva of the SALT Standing Consultative Commission.

That was the first time the Soviets admitted violating SALT II. From 30 to 40 SALT II violations have been reported since the agreement was signed in June 1979.

The Soviet generals already have admitted violating the 1,200 MIRVed launcher ceiling and the 1,320 aggregate, but not yet the 820 MIRVed ICBM silos.

Overall, the Soviet violations of these three ceilings involve five major strategic weapons programs, including:

- Continued construction of Delta-3 class nuclear submarines carrying MIRVed SS-N-18 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM). The Soviets already have produced 14 of these subs, the sources said.

- Continued production of TU-95 "Bear" bombers designed to carry long-range air-launched cruise missiles (ALCM).

- Continued production of "Backfire" intercontinental bombers, also equipped with ALCMs. More than 250 have been produced since 1973.

- Continued production of "Typhoon" class nuclear missile-carrying submarines with SS-N-20 MIRVed sea-launched missiles. At least three of these subs are under construction.

- The missile silo modifications to accommodate the SS-X-24 MX-type missiles.

The White House, as The Times reported yesterday, will present an unclassified report of Soviet arms control violations to the Senate next month, citing seven cases.